

Revd Watter Lyon

From his respectful Friend

William Graves

556

A Sermon, at the Ordination

OF

Mr. WILLIAM GRAVES.

COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



MR. W. H. RAVEN

LOVE TO CHRIST A LEADING QUALIFICATION
OF HIS MINISTERS.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE INTRODUCTION

OF THE

Reverend *William Graves*,

To the WORK of the GOSPEL MINIS-
TRY, in the CHURCH and SOCIETY,
in NORTH-WOODSTOCK, *August* 31, 1791.

By JOSEPH LYMAN, A. M.
PASTOR of the CHURCH in HATFIELD.

For the Love of CHRIST Constraineth us.—
II. Cor. v. 14.

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An Ordination Sermon, &c.

JOHN XXI. 17.

HE saith unto him the third time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

AFTER our Lord's resurrection, the third appearance which he made to his apostles collectively, was at the sea of Tiberias. The manner in which he discovered himself, was by a miraculous draught of fishes, and by familiar conversation with them at the table, as they sat at meat. Upon this occasion the apostle Peter discovered an uncommon attachment to Christ, which he had not lost even by his ungrateful denial of him. The main design of our Lord's appearance at this time, was, duly to humble Peter for his aggravated guilt in the shameful transactions of that gloomy night, which preceded the Saviour's crucifixion; to recover him to his former affection; to confirm him
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in the faith ; and to restore him to the honours of the apostleship, which he had forfeited by his solemn denial and renunciation of his divine Master.

PREVIOUS to Christ's last sufferings, he had premonished his disciples of the fearful conflict and agony through which he must soon pass to make expiation for sin : He had cautioned them against apostasy by predicting the severity of his sufferings and their danger, and by informing them, that they should all be offended in him and forsake him in his extremity. To these premonitions of the Saviour, Peter had replied by the strongest professions of unalterable attachment to his person. He declared, that he was ready to lay down his life for his sake ; to go with him into prison and to death ; and added, "*Although all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*" In answer to this confident assurance, our Lord replied, "*That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. Then Peter spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.*" After such positive pledges of affection and zeal, what fortitude might we not expect from Peter and his brethren? Ought they not to make good their professions ?

INDEED, at the opening of our Lord's last trials, Peter shewed some good degree of resolution : He drew his sword and made a vigorous assault upon the impious band, who came to apprehend the innocent Jesus. He cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. But when Jesus acquainted him, that this was not the proper mode of defence ; that He and his disciples must conquer by sufferings and not by carnal weapons ; that these became not the soldiers of his kingdom : When Peter con-
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sidered his Lord devoted to ignominy and death, and himself exposed to partake in the same scene of danger and distress, his courage was appalled, and his fears overwhelmed him. He not only fled away from his captivated Saviour, but when he was repeatedly questioned concerning his relation to him, he as often denied him, and with the most impious oaths and curses protested, That he knew not the man. Such was the deplorable issue of Peter's boasted zeal for Christ. This foul and open apostasy, justly exposed him to an utter deprivation of all the privileges of the apostleship, of all the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase.

YET as Peter's heart was not in the denial, since it was the effect of fear and not of malice, as in the case of Judas, so the merciful Redeemer determined to restore him from his offence, pardon his guilt & reinstate him in the apostolic office. This return of favour, and restoration to office, should be as formal and public, as the denial had been open and scandalous to Christ and his kingdom. Hence our Lord chose an opportunity when all the Apostles, who were acquainted with his shameful fall, were present, that Peter's conversion might be as conspicuous, as his transgression was notorious, and his restoration to the apostleship, as manifest as his renunciation of Christ had been reproachful to religion.

THE method in which Peter was reinstated was this: After eating with his disciples, Jesus turned himself to Peter, saying, "*Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these.*" He saith unto him, "*Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*" Upon this public testimony of affection, Christ renewed his apostolic commission in these words, "*Feed my Lambs.*"

PETER's apostasy was aggravated by repeated denials, his repentance therefore demanded repeated proofs.

proofs. Hence Christ renewed the question, *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me.* He saith unto him, "Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Christ says, "Feed my Sheep."—This, however, was not enough to assuage Peter's repentance and love after so foul a fall; therefore, "Jesus saith unto him the third time, *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me.*" Peter was grieved because Christ said unto him the third time "lovest thou me?" and he said unto him, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." He humbly referred himself to the omniscience of Christ to ascertain his love, and he cast himself upon the power and grace of Christ to preserve that love, which must otherwise decay and perish. Such were now the humiliating convictions of the once confident Peter. He felt all his strength and security to rest upon the faithfulness and compassion of his dear Redeemer.

THE Roman Catholics partly ground their daring claims of supremacy and infallibility in the Church of Christ, which they ascribe to Peter and his Successors, upon that repeated injunction of the Saviour, to feed his sheep. But so far is this opinion from having countenance from those injunctions of Christ upon Peter, that we shall by this transaction only find that Peter was restored at that time to the apostolic office and an *equality* with the other Apostles, which he had forfeited by an ungrateful and cowardly denial of his Lord and Master. But not to dwell upon the refutation of an impious claim, which has no support from the word of God, let us proceed to a more direct consideration of our text.

WE may observe,

1st. THAT a sincere love of Christ and a cordial desire to promote the purposes of his mediatorial kingdom, are most important and useful qualifications in those, who sustain the office of ministers in his Gospel Church.

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WHEN Christ was resolved to restore Peter to the Apostolic office, he thrice put that significant question, "*Simon Son of Jonas, lovest thou me.*" The first time to explain his meaning, he said, "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" more than these thy fellow disciples? More than these thy worldly connections? Than these thy nets, the implements of thy worldly gain and subsistence? Lovest thou me supremely above all other objects of thy affection? It was upon the condition of his possessing this love that Christ would entrust him with the care of his flock. As much as if he had said, Peter if there be any object, which thou prizest above me and my kingdom, thou art not a meet person to be entrusted with the concerns of that kingdom. First therefore examine thyself, what are thy prevailing affections, and what thou wilt make the main object of thine administrations and pursuits. Dost thou wish to serve me before all others? wilt thou cleave to me in neglect of others? wilt thou go with me through labours and sufferings, to prison and to death? Then art thou fit to be employed in the care of my sheep and my lambs. Love to a Father is the spring of sincere filial obedience. Love to a master is the foundation of all willing and uniform service. Where love is wanting other objects and interests will call away the hearts of Christ's ministers; make them slothful servants; mocking him with eye service and injuring his fold by indolence and treachery. Would one hope to be a good minister of Christ? would he find himself duly furnished to ministerial functions? let him prefer the interest and honour of the Saviour to every other consideration. This sincere preference will most effectually animate him in the labours and difficulties of his work, and fortify his mind against impending dangers; make him wise and zealous for Christ, patient in conflict, while he bears the burdens and reproaches of the Cross.

I do not say, that a man cannot be a regular minister of Christ while he is destitute of supreme love to him. Since, in this case, the church of God would be reduced to the utmost uncertainty and danger, not being able to determine whether or not, they enjoyed a true ministry and gospel administrations. Gods only knoweth the heart; men must judge by external evidence, unless we would reduce the church to the same uncertainty as attends the Roman Catholics in their Baptisms. *Baptism, say they, is essential to salvation; and where the administering Priest has no intention to baptize, there is no baptism.*" Hence not a person in that church can have any assurance of his baptism, and consequently no well founded expectation of his salvation. Who can tell the intention of the administering priest? Has God left the certainty of his ordinances upon so frail a foundation? Who knows the heart of his Minister; whether he sincerely loves Christ? God hath not grounded the reality of ministerial administrations upon such dubious evidence as the secret character of his Ministers. If the knowledge of a man's private character is not essential to determine us whether his administrations are scriptural & authoritative, we may be sure that he may be a minister without supreme love to God.

WHERE the call is regular and a profession of love to Christ is made; where the person devotes himself solemnly to the work of the ministry, and is in due order set apart to his work, he is then a regular visible minister of Christ, who is to be received and improved as such, and his administrations are valid and through divine sovereignty his labours may be successful to the good of souls. The contrary sentiment contradicts scripture facts and examples, since we are told of those who preached Christ out of strife and envy, that they might add affliction

affliction to the apostles bonds; and yet he would rejoice, not that those ministers were contentious and envious, but because Christ and his salvation were preached to perishing sinners. Some who ministered in the church had their ministry accompanied with miraculous gifts, but afterward they fell away. While they abode in the faith, they were Christ's regular ministers; when they apostatized they were no longer to be obeyed, but to be rejected as outcasts from office and Christ's kingdom.

I mention these things, that I may be understood as not limiting God, in the use of his instruments in promoting the kingdom of his Son; as not making sanctification essential to a *regular* minister, however essential it certainly is to a *good* minister of Jesus Christ.

OUR obligations to receive and obey a minister depend upon visible evidence of the regularity of his call and appointment, and the visible conformity of his doctrine and practice to the gospel of Christ. Upon the contrary supposition no church, no individual, can know who is a minister of Christ qualified to dispense his blessed gospel.

BUT this does not diminish the truth and importance of the sentiment which we have advanced, That love to Christ is the most important and useful qualification for the Gospel ministry. This love only should excite a person to undertake the sacred work. The evidence of this love should appear to all christians in choosing one to take the charge of their souls: the evidence of this love should ever be sought by those Ministers, who commit the sacred trust to others. They are to commit the dispensation of the Gospel to those whom they think to be truly faithful men. For that Minister who is destitute of this love will expose his own soul to a more aggravated and infamous punishment;

ment; he will probably endanger others, by not faithfully instructing them in divine truth; not seeking their spiritual interests with prayerfulness & diligent perseverance; he will be exposed to frequent and foul backslidings, yea, to a total apostasy, as has often been the case with those who did not love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Would a man then hope to serve Christ well and successfully in the ministry? He must love him above all. Would a people wish to be faithfully served? They must seek for such a minister. Would Ministers wish to have Christ's sheep and lambs duly fed? They must labour for the evidences of this divine love in those whom they consecrate to the divine work.

II. IT is a matter of infinite moment to those who undertake the ministry, to entertain a humble persuasion, that they are actuated by a prevailing love to their lord and master.

THAT ministers should be persuaded of their love to Christ before they enter upon his service we may clearly argue, from our Lord's putting the question thrice to Peter with so much solemnity, *Lovest thou me?* and also from Peter's modest reply, "*Lord thou knowest that I love thee.*" Until Christ had this assurance in presence of his disciples he would not commit his sheep to Peter's care. A man should be impressed with a deep sense of the importance of a divine love in order to his being faithful and useful in the ministry. To enter upon so great a work as the care of souls without love to souls and to the Saviour of souls, without a persuasion of such love, must be a presumptuous rashness. A minister, in such case, can have no encouragement of divine protection and assistance in his work; no security of his own perseverance; no well grounded hope of exemption from error in doctrine and practice; from backslidings and scandalous apostasies: He cannot flatter himself, that he shall

shall remain outwardly obedient to the truth, moral in his life, watchful for souls'; that he shall not grossly fall away, betray the cause he has vowed to support, heap double destruction upon his own head & entangle many other unhappy sinners in his fall.

WHEN he has no well grounded hopes from another world, will he faithfully pursue his work, while he must loose so many of the advantages and honours of the present life? How can he be armed against the snares and deceitfulness of sin and the world? Dangers will appall him: he has no rock to which he can fly for shelter. His ministry will be too easily conformed to the necessities of the times; to the fashionable opinions and reigning customs of the age; and under his labours religion will receive but feeble aid, and vice will be checked with a timorous and slothful hand. When the enemy breaks into the fold, he will flee, because he is an hireling, undertaking the service for temporal advantages, and not for the love of Christ and of his flock. He then who desires the good work and office of a bishop must be able deliberately to avow his love to Christ from a humble persuasion of the sincerity of it. After careful examination and a well founded conclusion, that he has this love, he may cheerfully undertake the great work, relying upon his Saviour's aid, to strengthen his feeble confidence, his wavering faith, his languishing zeal, and to accept and succeed his faithful labours for the good of souls, and for the progress of the gospel of the grace of God.

III. The leading duty of the ministerial office is to feed Christ's sheep.

The great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, having laid down his life for the sheep, has instituted the gospel ministry, to bring them into his fold and to feed them with that rich provision, which he
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has made for their nourishment and growth in grace. He has enjoined it upon those whom he hath consecrated the guides and pastors of his flock, that they guard his fold, protect and feed his sheep.

to feed Christ's sheep is a figurative expression. Sheep an inoffensive useful species of animals are put to signify the members of Christ's visible kingdom, such as profess his name and hear his Gospel. These are to be fed with such instructions and administrations as will conduce to their increase and perfection in holiness, and their preparation for heaven. Good doctrine is the food of souls, by which rational powers are enlarged and moral affections are regulated and sanctified, to discharge all relative duties to man, and all pious exercises to God, and are most attuned to the service and enjoyment of God and the Redeemer. The minister's first duty is to impart such doctrines, and in that manner, which will most effectually conspire the sanctification & redemption of the souls of men.

LET US enquire generally—

1st. WHAT these doctrines and instructions are, which ministers must employ for the sanctification and final salvation of souls. He, who has commissioned ministers to feed his flock, has provided the food with which he would have them fed. This food is the sincere milk of the word, the inspired truths contained in the holy scriptures, which are sufficient to make *the man of God perfect ; to furnish him to every good word and work*, by which he may edify Christ's body, the Church. The doctrines which ministers impart to their hearers must be taken from the pure fountain of God's written word. Other doctrines are of no comparative use and importance in promoting faith and piety. They must, therefore, derive all their lessons

lessons of instruction from the lively oracles, as alone important to make men holy and happy. Scripture contains proper and sufficient instructions for persons of every character and condition, in all their respective relations and circumstances. We can imagine no situation or condition of life, to which something may not be applied from scripture, even, as much as is necessary for the information and conduct of human life. Such is the fulness, such the variety of scripture, that diligent enquiry will find a competent portion for every class of men, for every individual, for the sure regulation of faith and manners. And the wisdom of Christ has limited his ministers, in all their labours and instructions, to the holy scriptures. They may teach and prescribe nothing of human invention, as of any use or importance to salvation.

HE who steps over this line, stretches himself beyond his measure and teaches for doctrines the commandments of men, to the reproach of the commandments of God, and of the faithfulness of Christ, as the Prophet of the Church. Ministers should inculcate nothing but what they find fairly written in or clearly deducible from the sacred scriptures. It is impiety to set up for authorities their private opinions, their own philosophical deductions and discoveries. When they find any thing not fairly contained in scripture, they have found that, which as Christ's ministers, they should not preach, and which it is of little consequence if men heartily reject. To the law and to the testimony are they confined, as far as there is any light or authority in them. They must consequently turn their diligence and attention to investigate, what are the doctrines of holy writ, lest they perplex and mislead souls.

THEY must seek after the leading truths of Revelation

velation, that they may arrange them first, in their preaching and employ less important truths in their proper place to support the greater. Not setting upon a level, fundamental and doubtful doctrines. Not attempting by human reasoning to explain scripture mysteries, which are revealed as articles of faith, while they still continue incomprehensible to finite understandings.

MYSTERIES in nature are as numerous as those in religion, as hard to be explained & yet they are believed. Ministers then are to propound christian mysteries to the faith of their hearers : but attempts to explain them are to waste the time of hearers and to betray the fond conceit and weakness of teachers. While religious mysteries are propounded, it is sufficient to alledge the truths and doctrines which naturally flow from them.

to instance upon this point : Scripture records, that the Son of God, equal with the Father, by assuming our nature became a man. To explain how this should be is a vain attempt. Our business is to collect and lay to view the scripture evidence of this mystery and inculcate faith upon our hearers, and then from this mystery we may easily deduce the doctrine of the infinite sufficiency of Christ's atonement for sin. But while ministers, in former ages, laboured to explain the manner of the incarnation, they split the church with divisions and filled the house of God with error and persecution.

How an innocent and holy being as Adam was, could admit a temptation to sin, is a mystery. Yet scripture records the fact, and ministers would do well to content themselves with reporting it and not wade out of their depth in telling how it could be, or how it must take place. If such disquisitions wear the complexion of wisdom, yet they really betray the minister and his hearers into deep spiritual ignorance ; into that vain philosophy which spoils christians

christians of their humility and resignation to the instructions of God's word.

I mention these instances, merely as examples, to convince our minds, *That Teachers have nothing to do, in explaining doctrines, which the bible and providence have not explained.* Their business is to state those doctrines, expressly, and then adduce such truths as clearly result from them—Thus, Man fell: He was lost. He needed an atonement: Christ was this atonement.

FURTHER,

IN dispensing scripture doctrine, ministers should make, most of all essential, those doctrines, which scripture makes of the greatest moment—Such as, The fall of man; his just condemnation; his utter ruin by the first covenant; his vile and total depravity, consisting, in an alienation of heart from God; the grace of God, extending to man, in this wretched condition, resolving to save to himself an inheritance, from among them; for this end, sending his son in their nature, to die for them, as the alone satisfaction for sin; the application of this sacrifice, to the justification of believers; whose justification is grounded, meritoriously, upon the righteousness of Christ, and, conditionally, upon the faith, repentance and new obedience of God's redeemed; who, in no other way, can obtain pardon and admission to heaven. These, and doctrines like these, are the leading topics of gospel preaching. These truths, through the renewing and applying influences of the spirit, are the healing & food of souls. Upon these doctrines, if a minister dwell often, long, and importunately, he does well, giving the children their bread, in due season.

BUT, when he exhausts his time and labour, in studying and preaching, upon truths of less moment, truths, which a man may disbelieve and yet be perfectly secure of heaven, he is, then, feeding

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them with husks, with vain jangling, spoiling them with that false science, and that vain philosophy, which were so abhorrent, from the feeling of an apostle, and so detrimental to the growth of christian knowledge, and christian charity, in the churches of the apostolic age.

A minister brings spiritual food, essential doctrine, when he tells sinners, "*He that believeth not shall be damned. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. For him that repenteth, his sins shall be blotted out.*" But, it is much to be doubted, Whether, he would bring the bread of God to sinners, by painfully labouring to prove, *That men must be willing to be damned, before they exercise a temper, which will fit them to be saved.*

IN a word, he, who preaches the Father, and his sovereign electing love to sinners ; Christ, and his all atoneing sacrifice ; the Holy Spirit, and his supernatural work of regeneration and sanctification ; faith, repentance, and new obedience, as the purchase of Christ, the operation of his spirit, and the condition of the sinners restoration to God ; such a preacher feeds the sheep of Christ ; especially, when he enforces these doctrines, by the Judgment to come, in which, Christ is to be admired in his saints, and glorified in the punishment of those his enemies, who would not have him to rule over them. But he, who is wise in adjusting nice disputes, upon sentiments, in which good christians, frequently differ, and yet live piously, such an one withholds the childrens bread, and while their perishing necessities ask for a fish, he gives them a serpent, to envenom their bosoms with strifes and envyings, and all those uncharitable feelings, which influence men to bite and devour one another.

WE proceed—

2dly. To point out the methods, by which, ministers should communicate their instructions to others.

THEY are, first of all, to acquaint themselves well, with

with scripture doctrines, in their real and relative importance. This implies, previous preperation for the ministry, and previous study, in order to preach to their people. Had men miraculous gifts, they might depend upon the evidence of those gifts, to authenticate their mission and preaching; but since these gifts have ceased, ministers must be called *ordinarily*, and be furnished, by common and approved methods, for the duties of their office. They should possess good natural abilities, and an aptness to communicate their ideas, aided by diligent study, in useful arts and sciences, especially, in theological and scriptural knowledge. Would they bring food to the household? They must examine, whether they have this food in possession; whether they have furniture for the ministry.

such, as pretend to an inward and special call, & rely upon present supernatural assistances in teaching, ought, if they would gain credit, to produce miraculous proof of such a mission: until, such proof is produced, they ought to be treated as impostors. Such proof would be in point, and carry conviction; without it, it is as vain in them, to demand our belief, as it is in us, to hope to convince them, by argument, of the error of a sentiment, which they have adopted, without support, either, from argument or scripture.

To bring bread to the household, a teacher must be a man of learning, mighty in the scriptures, a laborious student in divinity, and so far acquainted with language and elocution, as to lay his instructions, fairly, to the understanding and conscience of his hearers. He must possess judgement, to proportion his labours, among scripture doctrines; to produce the best arguments, to gain a welcome admission for the truth, and propound motives which may incline the heart, to embrace gospel grace. He must have skill, to imede doctrines; to vindicate them, when attacked; to enlighten the ignorant;

ignorant; and to silence gainfayers; - to establish and edify souls in the truth. To obtain these talents, the preacher must study diligently, and pray, earnestly, to God, to direct his studies, and to perfect, both his private and public labours.

THAT, he may suit his instructions to his people he must, diligently, know the state of his flock: then he will know, how to give to every one, a portion in due season. He should cultivate a sincere love of his flock, that out of pure affection, he may seek for those doctrines, which will be of the greatest use to them. A strong desire, of their eternal welfare, will constrain him, in defiance of dangers, to withhold no useful truth, no reproof or admonition, which may conduce, to their improvement and sanctification.

BUT that, which will, first, impress the mind of a good minister is, That his people are Christ's sheep; that, to Christ, he is to give his account, when the Great Shepherd shall appear. This solemn thought will awaken his attention, to all those methods of instruction, by which, the sheep may be fed and nourished for heaven.

MINISTERS are to feed their flocks, not only, by public preaching, but by their private conversation and their examples of christian faith and purity; by a life of meekness, forbearance, and charity; by contentment and fortitude; by resignation and prayer.

THEY will embrace, the favourable seasons of sickness and affliction, to impart instruction, conviction and comfort, to the souls of their people.

THEIR instructions are to be communicated, by the administration of ordinances, sacraments and discipline, according to the rules of God's word. Thus, by gospel preaching, & administrations, & by an exemplary practice of christian duties, Ministers are to feed the sheep & the lambs of Christ's flock.

3dly, THUS, to instruct souls, in the belief and
practice

practice of gospel duty, is the great obligation of the christian ministry.

AS the motive of Christ, in making peace by his blood, was the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners, so his ministers are appointed, to carry this benevolent design into execution. This is the foundation of their appointment, and it is incumbent upon them, to bend all their powers and labours, to bring sinners, to accede to the terms of gospel grace, to practise gospel duties, and enjoy the blessings of redeeming mercy. This, then, is the first, and last wish of a good minister, that Christ may be exalted, in the salvation of souls. His vigorous exertions are employed, to turn sinners to God, and to establish and perfect them, in gospel faith and practice. This is the object, to which, ministers must direct their prayers, their meditations, their compositions, their public ministrations, their private conversation, and example. All must coincide, with this godlike design, and in this way, they must become workers, together with God, in building up the kingdom of Christ. He does his duty best, whose heart and labours are most in his work; he may humbly hope for success, in the conversion of souls: Should he fail of this desired success, yet his grief and disappointment, at the obduracy of his hearers, shall not return empty. When Israel is not gathered, he shall be glorious, in the eyes of the Lord. His fidelity and zeal for Christ shall be his righteousness, in time to come: his judgement and reward shall be with his God. Conscious, that he has travailed for souls, that he has laboured sincerely, in his good work, he shall meet the approbation of his Judge, in the joyful day of retribution.

THE command of Christ, the promise of his favour, the excellency of the object, the worth of souls, the care of his own salvation make it, the first

first and highest obligation of the christian minister, to spend and be spent, cheerfully, for the sanctification, and blessedness of immortal souls. The salvation of souls is the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel ministry. The salvation of souls should be the labour of the sabbath, of the week, of his whole life. The desire of this end should attend him to his pulpit, in his study and closet, and accompany all his intercourse with his fellow men, and be the companion of his visits and prayers, for the sick and the dying. In that point, the salvation of souls, the ministers of Christ center all the actions of their lives, and all the exercises of their minds. He, who does thus, discharges well and honourably, his sacred office, and is a good minister of the new testament ; and he shall shine, with refulgent glory, in heaven, when all unfaithful ministers, hypocritical professors, and scornful disobedient hearers, shall wonder and perish, with an irretrievable destruction.

THUS, I have endeavoured, to bring to view, some leading qualifications, of a good minister of Jesus Christ, & given some general description, of the duties of his holy office. Leaving your minds, to draw such conclusions and inferences, from the subject, as are most useful and necessary, I shall only ask your further attention to such addresses, as are customary and proper, upon these solemn occasions.

I, first, apply myself to the person, who has accepted the charge of souls, in this place, and is now, according to the institution of God our Saviour, to be consecrated to the sacred work of the gospel ministry.

DEAR SIR,

IT is neither necessary to you, nor to this assembly, for me to express, my hope and rejoicing in you, as an expected fellow labourer in the Kingdom of Christ. It would not be proper, that I should

should attempt to anticipate, what will be committed to you, in trust, by him, who is, to ordain you, and give you, in charge, the mysteries of the kingdom of God. From him, you will receive directions, how to undertake, and execute the trust, of a shepherd and Bishop of souls. Yet, I may be indulged, to urge upon your conscience, that solemn enquiry, which Christ addressed, to the penitent Peter, and which, upon this solemn occasion, he addresses to you, "*Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me more than these?*" Do you prefer Christ, above your chief joy? You cannot, too often, nor too urgently, put home this enquiry, to your heart. You cannot labour, with too great diligence, after new and increased measures of this love. When Christ calls your attention, to this enquiry, be not grieved; but, be most of all grieved, when, through remissness and the power of temptation, you have reason to doubt, of the reality or fervency of this love. Do you love Christ? You can do his work cheerfully: you will not faint, or be weary, through the greatness of the way. For his sake, you can endure, with patience and fortitude, labours and wrongs, the world's reproaches and persecutions; for your expectations, lie beyond this vale of mortality. The love of Christ will be your full and adequate portion. It will strengthen you, to bear success in your ministry, with humility; ill success, with meekness; to forgive the ungrateful returns, which, in various instances, you may receive, for your love and faithfulness to souls. Love to Christ will excite you, to return, all the praise, and glory of your success to him, who hath regarded your low estate, and honoured you, as an instrument of good to souls.

do you love Christ? Then will you love his sheep, and be in earnest, to bring home sinners to his fold, and to establish them in the faith. This sacred

cred affection will quicken you, to provide food for his household, and to give to every one, his portion, in due season. This will sanctify your prayers for your people, enliven your studies, and choose and perfect your subjects of public discourse, and of private counsel and reproof. This will animate your addresses to saints and sinners, your consolatory instructions and prayers over the beds of the sick and dying. By this, you shall rule well the house of God, and with meekness, firmness and impartiality, administer the discipline of his kingdom. This will furnish you, with consolations for mourners, and be the unfailing support, and rejoicing of your own soul; and render you, a useful blessing to this people and the church of Christ.

CULTIVATE this love, by which Christ shall be honoured, his kingdom promoted, your people profited, and your own reward and happiness effectually secured.

AND now, Dear Sir, you are going a warfare: but you are not going at your own charges. The master who hath called you hath promised you a reward, if you are found faithful. Your reward is not promised for this life: you may have trying and fiery conflicts, before the warfare is accomplished. You adventure, into an employment of labours and perils, which demand your faith, patience and fortitude. The Captain of our salvation has trodden the path, before you. Look to him; he has promised to be with you, that he will never leave you, nor forsake you. This is ground, enough, on which to rest your fidelity, your attachment and hope.

God give you success here; the joy of turning many to righteousness. But, Sir, be thou faithful unto the death, and he shall give you a crown of life.

OUR next attention is due, to the church and congregation of God's people, in this place.

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BELOVED,

NOW, you are to receive one of the valuable and useful gifts of our Lord's purchase; the blessing of the gospel ministry : which, as we hope, is thus, early, restored to you, in answer to your prayers. You have, now, brought to you an evangelical Pastor, who is a faithful brother, as I suppose, who will have, a natural and an affectionate care, for you and your children ; for the sheep and the lambs of Christ's flock. Your reputation, in years passed, for a respectful and christian treatment of Christ's ministers, leads us to expect, that you now receive, with humility and gratitude, this heavenly gift; and wisely improve the ministry of reconciliation.

is one, now, to be set over you, to break unto you the bread of life, & to provide food for your souls? Remember, that as Christ has commanded him, to feed you, so he hath, equally, commanded you, to receive the food, which, from God's word, he shall bring to you. The bread of God is offered to you. If you lothe and reject it, your souls shall starve and perish, miserably. Hear, then, God's word, as for your lives, as expecting, to give an account. Grieve not the heart of your minister, by carelessness or obduracy, for then he shall be a swift witness against you, another day. Comfort his heart, regard your own salvation : honour King Jesus, by receiving, with meekness, the ingrafted word, which is able, to make you wise to salvation. For his works sake, love, reverence, and obey your minister: provide for him, that he be careful, for nothing of this world's goods ; that he may provide for your souls, and bring heavenly bread and pure beaten oil into the sanctuary. Strive, together, in your prayers to God, for him : bear his infirmities : imitate his virtues : by discharging every relative and christian duty, fulfil his joy.

FINALLY, brethren, be ye followers of Christ, as

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dear children : be perfectly joined, together, in one mind, in gospel truth. Live in peace, and the very God of peace be with you, and your children, and your minister, until, you shall all be joint partakers of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for you.

AND, now, God grant, of his infinite mercy, through Jesus Christ, that all, who are the witnesses of these solemn transactions, may be made wiser and better, by what they see and hear ; that the gospel treasure be lost, upon no one of them ; and that the ministry of reconciliation, which they still enjoy, may not be a favour of death unto death, but a favour of life unto life, unto their precious and immortal souls.———AMEN,



